

Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-09

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R 121238Z MAY 75

FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7050

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, IS, JO

SUBJ: POLITICAL GATHERING OF WEST BANK NOTABLES

1. UNVEILING CEREMONY IN BEIT SAHUR OF STATUE DEDICATED TO LATE GREEK CATHOLIC BISHOP GABRIEL ABU SA'DA, SUNDAY MAY 11, BECAME PLATFORM FOR FIRST POLITICAL GATHERING OF WEST BANK MAYORS AND OTHER NOTABLES THAT WE CAN REMEMBER. SPEECHES DELIVERED BY ALL OF NINE SPEAKERS WERE HIGHLY EXPRESSIVE OF PALESTINIAN NATIONALISM, WITHOUT EXCEPTION PRAISED ARCHBISHOP CAPUCCI (AND MADE ONLY PASSING REFERENCE TO THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE LATE BISHOP). WHILE SPEECHES MADE NO DIRECT REFERENCE EITHER TO KING HUSSEIN OR PLO, CRITICISM IMPLIED AND EXPLICIT WAS VOICED AGAINST ISRAELI OCCUPYING AUTHORITIES. MOST VOCIFEROUS CRITIC OF ISRAELI OCCUPATION WAS RAMALLAH MAYOR KHALAF, ONLY SPEAKER WHO MADE DIRECT REFERENCE TO ISRAEL. AFTER SPEECH KHALAF COMMENTED TO CONGEN OFFICER THAT HE FEARED SPEECH WOULD SEND HIM TO THE BRIDGE (EUPHEMISM FOR DEPORTATION BY ISRAELI AUTHORITIES). SPEAKERS INCLUDED CROSS-SECTION OF POLITICAL SPECTRUM OF WEST BANK SUPPORTERS OF KING HUSSEIN AND PLO, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MOST PROMINENT OF WHOM WERE ANWAR NUSSEIBEH, MAYOR

KARIM KHALAF, FORMER JERUSALEM CITY COUNCILOR DR. IBRAHIM TLEEL, AND TULKARM MAYOR HILMI HANOUN. OTHERS PRESENT, WHO DID NOT SPEAK, INCLUDED HEBRON MAYOR SHEIKH MOHAMMAD ALI JA-ABARI, BETHLEHEM MAYOR ELIAS FREIJ, DIGNITARIES OF GREEK CATHOLIC AND LATIN CHURCHES OF JERUSALEM, AND MEMBERS OF CONSULAR CORPS.

2. WE TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO ASK MAYORS KHALAF AND HANOUN IF ISRAELI MILITARY AUTHORITIES HAD ACTUALLY BEGUN IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY TRANSFERRING WIDE ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY TO LOCAL MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AS PRESS PERSISTENTLY REPORTS. BOTH MAYORS REPLIED THEY KNEW NOTHING OF ITS IMPLEMENTATION. MAYOR HANOUN CALLED POLICY EMPTY TALK.

3. COMMENT: RELATIVELY UNINHIBITED OUTPOURING OF SENTIMENTS BY SPEAKERS IN THIS GATHERING IS UNIQUE PHENOMENON IN WEST BANK POLITICS. PROBABLY REFLECTS COMBINATION OF GROWING RESENTMENT OF WEST BANKERS IN GENERAL TOWARDS MILITARY OCCUPATION AND INCREASED SELF-CONFIDENCE OF ARABS VIS-A-VIS ISRAELIS. POLITICAL TONE OF SPEECHES WAS PARTICULARLY SURPRISING IN LIGHT OF KNOWN ISRAELI WEST BANK GOVERNMENT PROHIBITION OF EXPRESSION OF SUCH VIEWS IN PUBLIC GATHERINGS. PARTICIPATION OF SUCH DIVERSE ELEMENTS AS PLO SUPPORTER KHALAF AND HUSSEIN SUPPORTERS NUSSEIBEH AND JA'ABARI IN THE SAME FORUM STANDS IN SHARP CONTRAST TO RECENT INABILITY OF WEST BANK NOTABLES TO AGREE ON COMPOSITION OF DELEGATION TO CONVEY CONDOLENCES TO SAUDI GOVERNMENT. DAY

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